

Chapter 5

Consultation and Coordination

5. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

This chapter includes information on public involvement activities and coordination with agencies and other organizations that has occurred to date in conjunction with the preparation of the Sand Point Magnuson Park Drainage System, Wetland/Habitat Complex and Sports Fields/Courts Project EIS.

5.1 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public involvement is the process by which interested and affected individuals, organizations, agencies, Indian tribes and governmental entities are consulted and included in the decision-making process. Through this process, members of the local community and other parties potentially affected by a proposed action have been given an opportunity to voice concerns, identify issues, suggest approaches to EIS analyses, and otherwise express their opinions. Formal opportunities for public involvement in the Sand Point Magnuson Park Drainage System, Wetland and Habitat Restoration, Sports Fields and Courts Project environmental review process included scoping, community meetings related to the project and other planned activities at Magnuson Park, and review of the Draft EIS.

5.1.1 EIS Scoping

As the lead agency for this proposed project, the Department of Parks and Recreation decided that before any public action (or decision) can occur relative to this proposal, the environmental impacts of the proposed project must be identified and appropriate mitigation measures identified. The Parks Department determined that this project could have a significant impact on the environment and that a detailed environmental impact statement (EIS) was needed.

The first step in the EIS preparation process is scoping. The purpose of EIS scoping is to identify issues that should be addressed in the EIS and to narrow the focus of the proposed EIS to an analysis of "probable significant environmental impacts and reasonable alternatives." The Department's Determination of Significance (decision that an EIS is required) and a supporting EIS Scoping Document were distributed to public agencies, affected tribes, organizations, and the public on August 24, 2001. The Department indicated that formal scoping comments would be accepted during a public comment period that ended September 28, 2001.

To provide additional opportunity for public comment concerning the scope of this EIS, public meetings were scheduled for September 18, 2001 from 7:30 – 9:30 a.m., with opportunity for oral comments on the EIS scope beginning at 8:30 a.m., and September 19, 2001 from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., with opportunity for oral comments on the EIS scope beginning at 7:30 p.m. Both meetings were held in the Sand Point Magnuson Park Community Activity Center (Building 406), 7400 Sand Point Way NE. The Department of Parks and Recreation advertised the meetings in local newspapers, in the Sand Point Magnuson Park newsletter, and by direct mail invitation distributed to 15,000 households in the general vicinity of the park.

The formal scoping meetings were lightly attended. Two members of the public attended the September 18 meeting and approximately eight visited the September 19 session. Participants asked questions

during the open house and question-and-answer portions of the meetings, but none elected to make formal comments for the record at either meeting.

At the conclusion of the EIS scoping period, the Parks Department had received 14 letters in response to the scoping notice. The Department reviewed the written comments received, as well as verbal comments or questions received at the public meetings, and noted comments that addressed the range of environmental issues and alternatives to be included in this EIS. Comments received during the scoping process were used to refine the Department's identification of issues to be addressed in the EIS.

5.1.2 Community Meetings

The Sand Point Magnuson Park Division of the Department of Parks and Recreation often sponsors public meetings at Sand Point on a wide variety of Park-related topics. Some of these community meetings focus on specific projects or issues, while others are open to discussion of the full range of park programs and planned actions. The Department of Parks and Recreation held two such meetings during the course of preparing the Draft EIS that specifically addressed topics related to the proposed action.

DPR arranged a lighting demonstration related to the sports field component of the project for the evening of October 8, 2001. Interested parties were invited to an informational meeting at the Sand Point Magnuson Park Community Activity Center (Building 406), 7400 Sand Point Way NE, from 7 to 10 p.m. The meeting portion of the open house consisted primarily of a question-and-answer session in which DPR and consultant staff fielded questions concerning the lighting systems proposed for the new sports fields. Attendees at the informational meeting were given information about the lighting systems and specifically what was being shown in the demonstration. People not attending the information sessions, but who viewed the lights did not receive this background information. Informational handouts were also available at the meeting. In addition, participants were able to view outside mock-upsof the types of field lighting fixtures that were under consideration for the project (at the time of the demonstration, a specific lighting system design had not been selected). Small arrays of typical sports field floodlights were mounted on lifts at approximately 80-foot heights, to simulate the brightness and position of lighting systems that would be proposed for the project. Viewing stations were also established at three locations on the hillside to the west of Sand Point, to provide an indication of the off-site visibility of the lights. Approximately 25 people attended the meeting portion of this lighting demonstration.

DPR also sponsored an issue-specific community meeting on the wetland/habitat and sports field project on the evening of October 22, 2001. This meeting was also held at the Sand Point Magnuson Park Community Activity Center. Following a brief presentation on the proposed project, participants were invited to ask questions about any type of issue or concern they held regarding the project. Approximately 50 people registered their attendance on the sign-in sheets for this meeting. While this meeting occurred following the close of the formal EIS scoping period, the issues identified and comments presented at this meeting were used to help shape the content of the Draft EIS.

In response to the level of interest and questions at the October 8 lighting demonstration, DPR arranged a second lighting demonstration for November 28, 2001. The content and format for this meeting were essentially the same as for the earlier demonstration.

In March 2002 the Department hosted a general “Design Open House” that showcased the major projects underway or anticipated at Sand Point Magnuson Park. The open house featured the drainage, wetland/habitat and sports fields/courts project with displays tables and opportunity for the public to talk directly with the design team.

In addition to the public meetings related to this project, a project advisory team (PAT) was assembled exclusively for this project. The PAT has met monthly over the duration of the design process, as the project development warranted, on the second Tuesday of the month. PAT meetings provided the additional opportunity for team members to review and provide input about the EIS process, helping to shape the content of the Draft and Final EIS.

The Sand Point Communications Committee (SPCC) meets monthly on the fourth Wednesday of the month. This committee meets to review progress and facilitate communications between all projects and organizations affiliated with Sand Point Magnuson Park. The Drainage System, Wetland/Habitat Complex and Sports Fields/Courts Project was an agenda item for several of these meetings, again providing additional opportunities for review and comment and helping to shape the content of the Draft and Final EIS.

5.1.3 Review of the Draft EIS

Public and agency review of the Draft EIS began officially on January 3, 2002, when the Department of Parks and Recreation filed the Draft EIS with the Washington Department of Ecology. At the same time, notices that the EIS was available for review were published in the SEPA Register and in local newspapers of general circulation. The SEPA rules provide for a minimum period of 30 days for public review of a Draft EIS.

The Parks Department allowed a 56-day period, extending from January 3 through February 28, 2002 for review of the Draft EIS. The formal comment period for the Draft EIS was therefore nearly double the minimum 30-day review period provided by SEPA. Any comments on the Draft EIS submitted to the Parks Department by letter, telephone or electronic mail during this period were reviewed and considered in the preparation of the Final EIS. The Parks Department also held a public hearing on February 4, 2002, near the middle of the Draft EIS review period, to provide an additional opportunity for public comment on the contents of the Draft EIS.

Approximately 80 people attended the February 4 public hearing. Fifty-five of those in attendance provided comments on the Draft EIS in the form of verbal testimony. By the end of the comment period the Parks Department also received written or telephone input concerning the Draft EIS from approximately 400 agency, organization and individual sources. Many of those sources provided comments on multiple dates, so the actual volume of Draft EIS comment input exceeds the number of comment sources by a considerable margin. Many of the sources who provided written input also offered verbal testimony at the public hearing.

At the conclusion of the Draft EIS review period, the Parks Department reviewed the written comments received, as well as the verbal comments received at the public meetings, and incorporated that information in the preparation of a Final EIS. The Final EIS addresses the comments on the Draft EIS in two ways. Responses to issues raised by the Draft EIS comments are provided in Chapter 4 of the Final

EIS. In addition, any changes to the substance of the Draft EIS necessitated by those responses are incorporated into the Final EIS text and graphics, primarily in Chapter 3 of the document.

Distribution of the Final EIS by the Parks Department represents the conclusion of the environmental review process for this project. Under the provisions of SEPA, no action can be taken on the proposal for a minimum of 7 days following issuance of the Final EIS.

Upon completion of this environmental review, the Parks Department will ask the City Council to take the appropriate actions to give its approval of the project. At that time the Council may

1. approve the project as proposed and analyzed in the EIS, or
2. make changes to the proposed project based on the results of the environmental analysis included in the EIS or other public input, or
3. reject the proposed project and direct the Department to begin a process to develop a completely different project proposal.

5.2 AGENCY/ORGANIZATION CONSULTATION

Over the past several years the Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation has been actively engaged in gathering public and agency input on the development of Sand Point Magnuson Park. The Department has established a Sand Point Community Communication Committee with the sole purpose of providing direct dialogue among the Department, the community and park users. This committee meets monthly and provides a key method for gathering input on the proposed project as well as other projects in the park. In addition, the Department has established a project advisory team specifically for this project. It is composed of experts in wetland and habitat systems, sports field designers, and community representatives. This advisory team meets monthly and provides input specifically related to this project. The Department also hosts occasional public forums that provide additional opportunity for public and agency comment, including an annual design forum on a Saturday in March. Finally, the Department publishes a quarterly newsletter to provide information to the broader community.